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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G-TIP AMB MILLER

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SUBJECT: G-TIP AMBASSADOR MILLER'S VISIT TO ITALY

¶1. Summary. G-TIP Ambassador John Miller visited Rome, Turin and the Vatican October 24-29 to discuss trafficking in person issues. His meetings with government officials, NGOs and victims reaffirmed that Italy has excellent laws to combat trafficking, but implementation depends on a mixed record of local cooperation between law enforcement and the NGO community. While Nigerian prostitutes continue to top the list of victims here, there are growing numbers of Romanian and Moldovan and fewer Albanian victims. Italy last year had the best record in Europe on victims' assistance programs, but pending budget cuts likely will reduce funds for social programs. The NGO community is divided over proposed "clean streets" legislation to move now legal prostitution from the streets to individual apartments; while the bill makes street prostitution illegal for both client and prostitute, it will greatly complicate NGO efforts to find and assist victims. Miller urged the Minister of Justice to extend collection of statistics on prosecution; the Minister of Equal Opportunity said that training police to recognize and appropriately treat victims was a priority but that it would take time to change old prejudices. Miller was the keynote speaker at a well-attended Embassy Rome-Embassy Vatican conference. End Summary.

¶2. Ambassador John Miller, Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) visited Italy October 24-29 to meet with Italian government (Minister of Equal Opportunity Stefania Prestigiacomo, Minister of Justice Castelli, Ministry of Interior Prefect AnnaMaria D'Ascenzo) and municipal officials in Rome and Turin, Vatican officials (septel), victims, NGOs and the Romanian Ambassador to Italy. DCM hosted a dinner for parliamentary, Ministry of Welfare and IOM officials. In Turin, Miller met with a roundtable of NGO organizations and later with law enforcement officials. Miller was the keynote speaker at a conference organized jointly by Embassy Rome and Embassy Vatican entitled "Joining the Fight Against Modern Day Slavery" (septel) and conducted numerous print and radio interviews. He was accompanied by his assistant Jennifer Donnelly.

¶3. There are approximately 20,000-30,000 TIP victims in Italy with 2,000-3,000 new victims moving in and out every year. Approximately 8-10% are minors. The majority are prostitutes, but the Minister of Justice indicated there was increasing concern about victims of forced labor, particularly illegal immigrants in agricultural and the underground economy. While there was a general sense that the trafficking problem was growing, there were no actual statistics to support this feeling. There was agreement the problem was continually shifting; observers noted a decline in the number of Albanian prostitutes but an increase in Romanian and Moldovan victims and said that traffickers (primarily organized crime groups) were becoming more violent and increasingly sophisticated in their ability to move victims within and between countries.

Protection

¶3. Virtually all interlocutors praised Italy's Article 18 legislation that provides assistance and a residence permit (similar to the U.S. "T" visa) for victims, although some NGO representatives complained that benefits were sometimes conditioned on cooperation for prosecution. Eastern European prostitutes were more likely to cooperate than Nigerians. During its first four years (2000-2004) under Article 18, 1,359 women participated in social protection projects, 4,287 received a residence permit, 5,865 received vocational or other educational courses and 3,734 received help in finding a job. The majority of recipients were Nigerian (52%) followed by Romanian, Moldovan, Albanian and Ukrainian. From 1999-2005, the Department of Equal Opportunity funded 371 social projects implemented under a 70% national-30% local funding scheme through regions/municipalities and NGOs, the most active of which included: Caritas, ECPAT, PARSEC, On the Road, and ACLI. Municipal efforts, including Rome's Roxanne Project and Turin's NGO Abele Group projects helped over 50,000 victims between 2000-2004.

¶4. Italy has yet to achieve full implementation of Article 18, as it relies heavily on police identifying victims and referring them to NGOs. In some cities such as Turin, there is model cooperation, an extensive network of support for victims and training for law enforcement officials. Miller

lunched in Turin with a group of victims (primarily Nigerian and Romanian) in a shelter funded by the city and run by an NGO. In Rome, there are excellent programs such as the Roxanne Project, funded with national and city funds and operated by NGOs, but cooperation between police and NGOs is less successful. In Milan, NGOs are well connected to the official community, but a lack of political interest has stalled progress in cooperation. Minister of Equal Opportunity Prestigiacomo conceded that the police do not always properly distinguish between illegal immigrants and trafficking victims. She told Amb Miller that improving victim identification and police-NGO cooperation was a priority for Italy, but the law was only four years old and it takes time to change old habits and prejudices of police officers. Officials at the Ministry of Interior said there were training courses for law enforcement officers and felt there was adequate understanding of how Article 18 should be implemented, but again implementation of training was not consistent throughout Italy.

Prosecution

15. During a meeting with Minister of Justice Castelli, Ambassador Miller praised the efforts of MOJ Statistics Chief DiSantis to collect national statistics on prosecution. Castelli noted that the slow pace of justice in Italy was responsible for discrepancies in the statistics between arrests and prosecutions but thought the latest data would show an increased number of prosecutions. He said it can take 3-4 years to move a case from investigation to sentencing. Castelli also acknowledged that Italy tracks cases, which can include multiple defendants on multiple charges, instead of individuals, so it can be difficult to assess numbers of actual traffickers brought to justice.

16. In Turin, Miller met with anti-mafia and city prosecutors and the leader of Turin's street police unit, all of whom cooperated well together and reported a high success rate in prosecuting traffickers. A visiting Romanian prosecutor, whose trip was funded by an FBI program, joined the meeting and described his efforts to work bilaterally to shut down the cross-border slave trade. Miller also met in Rome with the Romanian Ambassador, who very carefully praised Italian-Romanian TIP cooperation. He said there were approximately 250,000 legal Romanian workers in Italy and a similar number "in the process of being legalized" but insisted that the Embassy was rarely called upon to intervene to protect Romanian victims. It is unclear if he was aware of his prosecutor's activities in Turin.

17. The NGO community is divided over proposed "clean streets" legislation to move now legal prostitution from the streets to individual apartments. While the bill makes street prostitution illegal for both client and prostitute, it will greatly complicate NGO efforts to find and assist victims. They were particularly divided over the issue of punishing clients.

Prevention

18. The Ministry of Equal Opportunity funds NGO management and advertising for a toll-free hot line for victims which received 476,492 calls from July 2000-March 2005. Interestingly, the majority of calls were from citizens (not victims) complaining about prostitution or reporting information about victims. The Ministries of Equal Opportunity and Interior, with IOM, NGOs and EU counterparts conduct training for law enforcement and judicial officers. At every stop, Ambassador Miller explained the SAGE program for re-education of clients and noted its growing success in the U.S. NGOs were particularly interested in the program, but it would have to be adapted locally to recruit clients as prostitution is legal in Italy.